



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE FIRST EUROPEAN MEETING
OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
PROMOTED BY THE UNIVERSITY-SECTION
OF THE CATECHESIS-SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY (CSU)
COMMISSION OF THE COUNCIL
OF EUROPEAN BISHOP'S CONFERENCES (CCEE)***

*Hall of Blessing
Saturday, 11 July 2009*

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I warmly thank you for your visit that is taking place on the day of the Feast of St Benedict, Patron of Europe, on the occasion of the first European Meeting of University Students, organized by the Catechesis-School-University Commission of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). I extend my most cordial welcome to each one of you present here. I greet first of all Bishop Marek Jedraszewski, Vice-President of the Commission, and I thank him for the words he addressed to me in your name. I greet in a special way the Cardinal Vicar Agostino Vallini, and express to him all my gratitude for the precious service that the university ministry of Rome renders to the Church in Europe. Also I cannot but praise Mons. Lorenzo Leuzzi, the tireless animator of the Diocesan Office, and I greet with deep gratitude Prof. Renato Lauro, Rector Magnificent of the University of Rome Tor Vergata. I address my thoughts especially to you, dear young people: welcome to Peter's house! You belong to some 31 nations and are preparing to take on important roles and tasks in the Europe of the third millennium. May you always be aware of your potential and, at the same time, of your responsibilities.

What does the Church expect of you? It is the very theme on which you are reflecting that

suggests the appropriate response: "*New Disciples of Emmaus: Being Christians in the University*". After the meeting of European professors that took place two years ago, now you students are also coming together to offer the Bishops' Conferences of Europe your willingness to continue on the path of cultural elaboration that St Benedict intuited would be necessary for the human and Christian maturation of the European peoples. This can happen if, like the disciples of Emmaus, you encounter the Risen Lord in a practical experience of Church and, in particular, in the Eucharistic celebration. As I reminded your peers [a year ago during the World Youth Day held in Sydney](#), "At each Mass, in fact, the Holy Spirit descends anew, invoked by the solemn prayer of the Church, not only to transform our gifts of bread and wine into the Lord's body and blood but also to transform our lives, to make us, in his power, 'one body, one spirit in Christ' (*World Youth Day Mass, Randwick Race Course, Sydney, Australia*). Your missionary commitment in the university context therefore consists in witnessing to the personal encounter you have had with Jesus Christ, the Truth that illuminates the path of every person. That "newness of heart" capable of giving a new sense of direction to personal existence originates from the encounter with him; and it is only in this way that one becomes a ferment and leaven of a society enlivened by evangelical love.

Therefore it is easy to understand why pastoral ministry within the university must be expressed with its full theological and spiritual value, helping young people to ensure that communion with Christ leads them to perceive the deepest mystery of mankind and of history. And, precisely because of their specific evangelizing action, the ecclesial communities involved in this missionary action such as for example the university chaplaincies can be the place for the formation of mature believers, men and women aware of being loved by God and called, in Christ, to become animators of university ministry. The Christian presence within universities becomes increasingly demanding and at the same time fascinating, because faith, as in past centuries, is called to offer its irreplaceable service to knowledge, which in contemporary society is the true driving force behind development. It is on knowledge, enriched with the contribution of faith, that a people's ability to know how to look to the future with hope overcoming the temptations of a purely materialistic vision of our essence and of history depends.

Dear young people, you are the future of Europe. Immersed in these years of study in the world of knowledge you are called to make use of your best resources not only intellectual in order to build your characters and to contribute to the common good. Working for the development of knowledge is the specific vocation of universities and, in the face of the vastness and complexity of knowledge available to humanity, it requires a higher and higher moral and spiritual quality. The new cultural synthesis being formed in our time in Europe and the globalized world needs the contribution of intellectuals who can present the subject of God anew in academic lecture halls, or rather regenerate that human desire to seek God "*quaerere Deum*" which I have mentioned on other occasions.

As I thank all those who work in the field of university ministry, under the guidance of the

institutions of the CCEE, I hope that the fruitful journey begun several years ago may continue, and I express my deepest encouragement and appreciation of it. I am sure that your meeting in Rome in these days will propose further stages on the journey toward more integral planning, which will foster involvement and communion among the different practices already operative in many countries. Dear young people, together with your teachers you help to create laboratories of faith and culture, sharing the efforts of study and research with all the friends whom you meet at university. Love your universities, which are training grounds for virtue and service. The Church in Europe places deep trust in all of your generous apostolic commitment, aware of the challenges and difficulties but also of the great potential of pastoral action in the university sphere. As for me, I assure you of my support in prayer and I know that in turn I can count on your enthusiasm, on your testimony, above all on your friendship which you have expressed to me today and for which I thank you wholeheartedly. May St Benedict, Patron of Europe and my personal Patron in the Pontificate, and above all the Virgin Mary, whom you call upon as *Sedes Sapientiae*, accompany you and guide your steps. My Blessing to you all.

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